PERIODICAL DIV.

The Black Cat

June 1903

The Gold Goose Scientist.
Harry Irving Greene.

The Rivalry of the Grave.
$100 Prize Story.
Robert Adger Bowen.

The Stolen Wedding Trip.
Howard Crosby Warren.

The Artist's Story.
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On the Upper Rio Grande.
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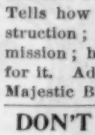

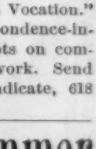

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The Gold Goose Scientist.*

BY HARRY IRVING GREENE.

"NEVER heard of Pete Norton?" drawled old man Pegleg Simpson. "Thort not. Pete was riz down in Coshocton County, Ohier, a good many year ago, him bein' the offspring of old Tuck Norton, who drowndid himself on a speculation of five dollars that he could abide under water for three minutes consecutive. He done it all right, and somethin' extry, but after the buryin', when his widder went around allowin' to collect the money from Jim Fifer, who had bet on t'other side of the proposition, Jim wouldn't loosen hold on the cash. Said he had made the bargain with old Tuck pussonelly, and so long as Tuck seemed satisfied and hadn't dunned him for it he reckoned it wasn't no one else's perticaler business. So that settled *that*, and the widder lost her old man without gettin' full and adequate compensation. Course there was a pint in Jim's argyment, technicolly speakin', but pussonelly I allers thort he otter given her a couple of dollars, anyway, to ease her sorrer, if not two-fifty.

"Well, old Tuck left behind him, amongst his other wuthless truck, this here young Pete, and he suttenly was the most wuthless yooth that ever lived and had his bein'. The specifications he was built by called for a critter about six foot one way and one foot

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t'other, and so dern lazy he would let Jenkins's prize ram butt him over the fence rather than take the trouble to climb it — and Pete exceeded his specifications considerable. Didn't do nothin' from early spring to late fall that year but set with his feet histed up and brag about a snow shovelin' contrivance he had figured out which would clear all the roads in the State durin' the winter as slick and clean as a whistle; then, when cold weather come along, he got switched off unto a preparation to attract pertater bugs, allowin' they'd leave their business and come in from twenty miles around to waller in it. Course it would have been a good thing, and the people got interested, but about the time the danderlions was a-bustin' into bloom and our hopes was towerin', he got hold of a book on Nateral Science, and after that he allowed nothin' would appease his hankerin's but bein' able to have familiar doin's with lightnin' and other nateral phenominy. So he set with his nose a-rubbin' back and forth across that printin' for more'n two weeks, and then riz up allowin' that the Almighty might as well take in his sign because he, Pete Norton, scientist, wouldn't need no help in runnin' the firmament after that.

"About a week later he was settin' on his shoulder blades and ruminatin,' when everbody noticed that a new idee was percolatin' gradual through his system. At first he only stropped up the sides of his nose with the paam of his hand and looked uncommon thoughtful; then he chuckled for a bit and fell to scratchin' himself; later on strugglin' to his feet and draggin' them away after him by main strength. For some little time followin' his chair was vacant at our councils; then one day he crawled into Si Hopkins's rest parlor — Si bein' the old one-hoss trust that doled out the groceries, drugs and coffins for the community — and fell exhausted into a chair. About ninety per cent of us prominent citizens of the Corners was aggregated there, gabbin' and waitin' for a day to come along when it wasn't neither too hot nor too cold to work, and after restin' up for a bit Pete stretched himself like an injy rubber band, aroze to his feet and straddled over to the counter behind which Si was presidin'. Then he dug down in his jeans and pulled out a dozen or fifteen little pieces of some kind of yeller stuff, about the size of buckshot, but rough like, and tossed them onto the counter before Si.

"'What's your notion about them?' he asks, indifferent as a cow a-chewin' her cud.

"Well, Si picked one up, hefted it, held it at arm's length, cocked his head and aimed his eye at it. Next he took a bottil of some kind of testin' licker and rubbed a few of them all over with it; looked again — clusser this time — said, 'H'm,' and let them rattle betwixt his fingers onto the boards. 'If they ain't little solid gold nuggits,' he answers, twistin' his goat whiskers around his finger, 'then I'm as big a fool, almost, as you be.'

"'Thort so,' Pete goes on, gatherin' them into a pile. Then he holds them clus under Si's nose. 'What'll you give me for the lot?'

For a minute Si meditated with a fur-away, spiritool expression on his old rat countynence, then took and dumped them onto one pan of a little pair of scales that was balanced so ticklish that a hoss fly and a grasshopper was usin' them for a teeter-teeter. 'I'm jest out of gold nuggits,' he answers, puttin' a little brass weight on t'other side, 'but I'm expectin' a carload in to-morrer. Howsoever, pendin' their arrival' — and here he commences to figger on a piece of paper — 'I'll jest make it ten dollars for the fifteen of them, if I lose a forchin by the transaction.'

"Now, there wasn't a citizen of that rizin' community but would have bet his dollars against the holes in t'other feller's britches that Si was the most propinquitos old reptyle in money matters that had ever stood perpendicular on the American continent. Remember well when his wife died with about two dollars' wuth of gold fillin' in her molers the old skinflint had it dug out before he would let them plant her. Said he never did believe in burnin' up money, meanin' it in a figerative sense, of course. So we spectaters all knowed that whenever he offered ten dollars for somethin', the other feller was gettin' a powerful bad opportunity. Pete knowed it too, and they haggled and jawed backwards and forwards for a considerable time, and then agreed on twelve dollars and forty-two cents. Si counted out the money slow, squeezin' each piece as he let go of it, like he allers did Ike Thompson's wife's fingers, and Pete shoved them in his pocket, bought himself a fust-class, five-cent Cuby seegar and strolled out looking tolerable satisfied.

"Of course, we gathered around them nuggits immediate and

began to speculate on how he come by them. Everybody knowed there wasn't as much gold in that black prairie muck in twenty mile around as there was left on the stud in Si's shirt buzzum, and even if there had been Pete was too lazy to have dug it out; so for the first time in the history of the Corners we run across a subject that was too ponderous for us heavy thinkers to handle. And then when about a week later Pete come in with another handful of the stuff and went through the same performance again, politics and religion was forked out onto the dump heap mighty suddin. And the news spread like the dipthery too, and the next day the people commenced to come in from the surroundin' country to buy a pound of sand out of Si's sugar barrel and examine them nuggits, meanwhile askin' questions which nobody but Pete and the Almighty could answer, neither of which was doin' any talkin'. And then a little later he brings in another batch.

"'This here thing is a gettin' powerful tedjus,' says Eph Eggleston, as Pete pocketed the greenbacks. 'And it's my 'pinion them nuggits ain't nothin' more'n little gobs of copper melted off a kettle. Couldn't possible be nothin' else, and besides our copper biler which t'old woman left in the back yard has disappeared most mysterious.' At that innooendo Pete, who had previous only smiled supercilious at our speculatins, flared up like a salune that's got belted by a streak of lightnin'.

"'You'r an idjut,' he hollers, lookin' as mad as a pup with the hydrofoby. 'What do you prehistoric old fossyles know about 'lectricity and other nateral phenominy? An angle wum has a college education beside sech critters as you, what I could scrape the ignorance off of with a hoe. Gold is like sin — it's omnipresent. It's lurkin' in the air, in the water, in your stummiks — everywhere except your pockets. All you need is the nateral intellect and acquired learnin' to seggregate it out of solution and conglomerate it. For generations the world has been cavortin' around in space waitin' the advent of a scientist that could do it, and now he has arrove and is standin' upright on his hind legs before you. It's easier for me to perform sech things than it is for you to sneak a jack from the bottom of the deck, playin' seven up.'

"Well, of course we all slapped our legs and cackled pretty loud at that, his braggin' soundin' so preposterous. And that makes

Pete madder'n a hornet with a sore ear, and we seen that mebby, if we could aggryvate him fur enough, he'd up and 'criminate himself; so we kept proddin' him with sarcastic and cute remarks until bimeby he commenced makin' little hops up and down like a toad. 'Bet you two dollars I can prove it. You'r a herd of petryfied, benighted, hay-headed, goat-whiskered old crawfish, who wouldn't dast bet a chew of terbacker your brains wasn't made out of sawdust,' he stutters, shakin' the money at us.

"That was jest the opportunity we had been prayin' for, and so four or five of us chipped in and made up a puss of two dollars, and Pete went out a-cussin' us, returnin' in about ten minutes with a goose under his arm. Course some one made a comic remark about their bein' two of a kind, but Pete didn't notice it, jest set us to work creatin' a coop out of a drygoods box. Then, when we had got it finished, Si was appointed the fowl's guardeen, to see that no one tampered with her, and Pete said he must first starve the critter three days to get her stummik puckered up and in prime order before he could work his miracle.

"Needless to mention, we were all as curious as a sewin' society in wonderin' what sort of a fool performance he had rigged up, and on the day appinted the consolodated brains and wealth of the Corners was massed in Si's institution. Then the prisoner was fetched forth and Pete took a little box with wires hitched to it and elervated it aloft. 'This here's my patent gold conglomeratin' machine, feller citizens', he says, puffin' out his chest. 'I harnesses it to the fowl's anatermy, starts it up, and behold! The patent 'lectric flooid begins immediate to oxify and carbonize the infinertesimal particles of preshus metal what is a-hidin' in all livin' organisms, and out of nothin' I gets gold nuggits to sell dirt cheap to Si Hopkins.'

"With that he grabbed for the bird, but the latter, bein' a fool by natur and not carin' a cuss about science, flopped around pretty lively until Pete pulled half an ear of corn from his pocket and threw it on the floor. Then, when the fowl was peckin' the kernels off the ear, Pete got his machine adjusted and started her up.

"For a minute the gold factory squawked and hopped around most curious and then squatted down resignful in a heap. Pete kept a struttin' around for some time with one eyelid pulled down

like a winder shade, lookin' wiser than a superintendent of schools; then removed his invention. 'It's goin' to be a gorjus success,' says he, puckerin' up his lips. 'But I got to put the polishin' touches on them nuggits yet. Come around this afternoon at four, prepared to gaze upon the slickest miracle that was ever pulled off.'

"Well, we put the bird back in the box and hung ourselves up on the counter and other handy places and swapped lies until the time came. Prompt to the second Pete come in, and after givin' his confed'rit a drink of water allowed that the deed was did. Pursooent to his bossin', we all adjourned to the back yard and Si wrung the fowl's neck and opened her up with a jack knife, and, sure as retribution, there in her stummik was a dozen little gold nuggits, same as the others. There wasn't any gettin' away from evidence like that, and Parson Haskins walked off shakin' his head and allowin' that nothin' but misery could come from usurpin' the perogatives of the Creator and convertin' a lowly fowl, what was only meant to lay goose eggs, into a distillery of preshus metal. But old Eph Eggleston, who was allers a braggin' that he didn't have no more soul than a dried apple, and who didn't believe in nothin' from hell to holy water, only cussed.

"'He had that there goose salted all the time! Can't fool me with no sech ridiculous circus doin's,' he squeaked, and Si allowed he opined similar. Well, the upshot of it all was that Pete said he'd be derned if he'd have his scientific reputation smeared up by sech old turtils as them, and we appinted a committee of three old-sledge perfessers for further experimentin'. So they went out in the country, kidnapped the first goose they laid eyes upon and we incarcerated her in the coop and incarcerated the coop in a back room, afterwards lockin' the door with three different padlocks and givin' each of the Committee on Scientific Research and Occult Investigation a key.

"'There,' squeals old Eph, stuffin' a bundil of fine cut terbacker into the yawnin' orifice under his nose. 'If that dern long-legged Pete Norton can get any nuggits out of the innerds of that there goose, I'll bargin to attend next camp meetin' and vote the Demmycratic ticket presidential 'lection' — camp meetin's and Demmycrats being the two institutions Eph never could abide.

But when, at the end of three days, we fetched her out, and Pete had gone through the same motions, there lay another batch of nuggits, nateral as life and no possible way of accusin' him of prestidiggitation. That settled it beyond all argyment, and instead of lookin' upon Pete merely as one hundred and forty pounds of spiled dog meat, as we had done previous, we began to talk of runnin' him for the Legislature.

"But of course Si, who didn't think of nothin' all day nor dream of nothin' all night but how to skin somebody out of another nickel, seen the gorjus posserbilities of the invention and began to figger immediate on how to get in on the basement floor. Instead of runnin' a little one-goose nuggit factory and makin' livin' expenses, he allowed the thing otter be financed and worked to the limit while geese was cheap. He used up a half a lead pencil and a couple of yards of wrappin' paper figgerin' on it, then, gettin' scairt at his extravagance, he borrowed a slate and kept on until he had got it ciphered out that by investin' a few thousand dollars in geese and machines they could clear up enough money in one year to buy the Empire of Turkey. So he begun makin' propositions, Pete not appearin' specially anxious to dicker at first, but eventually they made a whack and drew up papers whereby Pete gave Si the gold goose rights for the State of Ohier for the sum and consideration of two thousand dollars, in hand paid. And the next day Pete got on the caboose, allowin' he was goin' up to Washington to see the President about his patents, which was the last we ever seen of his carkiss around the Corners.

"Well, the days kept a loafin' by and pretty soon Si commenced to get as fidgity as an old maid with the toothache. At the end of about a week he up and allowed he couldn't stand it no longer, so he rigged the machine that Pete had left behind him and said he'd get back them two thousand dollars or bust his galluses. But though he follered the directions powerful scrupulous, when he come to do his dissectin' the goose's stummik was as empty as a contribution box — not the least sign of a nuggit could he discover, even by analyzin' her whole anatermy with a magnifyin' glass. And so he went on experimentin' and spilin' geese, meanwhile gettin' haggarder and shrivelin' up more and more at every disappintment until at last he got to usin' himself for a weight in

measurin' out groceries. Finally his customers tumbled to the fact that he was cheatin' them, even at that, and then, to crown his sorrer, another feller started up a rival institution, and one day when Eph went into the old place to get trusted for a bushel of fine cut, all he could find of Si didn't weigh more'n a bunch o' starvin' snow birds. So that was the end of *him*, and we stuck him on the pint of a toothpick and buried him with befittin' orgies.

"But, long afterwards, we got news of Pete. Jim Robinson was down in St. Looy attendin' a fair, and he run across a side show which advertized they had on exhibition a heifer that could speak anything from the Doxolergy to a politercal speech. Nacherly enough, Jim's curiosity riz up, and after resistin' temptation until he was fagged out, he unwound a couple of yards of yarn from his wallet, fished out a dime that he had plugged up tolerable skilful, and went in, and sure enough, there was a heifer with a bump on her neck — kind of goitre — and from her mouth was comin' words, plain and distinct — but they missed bein' Doxolergy words by more'n a mile. She wasn't no stuffed critter, with a human bein' inside of her neither, and Jim was scratchin' his head and tryin' to figger out the combination, when all of a suddin Pete comes a crawlin' in — that is as near all of a suddin as Pete could do anything — and commenced exhortin'. Course he recognized Jim, and in the evenin' they hit the flowin' bowl together and got uncommon confidential.

"'How did you do it?' finally asks Jim, jerkin' his thumb over his shoulder towards the heifer.

"'Oh, that wasn't perticular differcult,' said Pete, pintin' the bottil up and lettin' the contents guggle down. 'She had a swellin' on her neck to begin with, so I jest cut that out, put in a little fonygraf and connected it up to her mouth with a rubber hose.'

"Then he inquired about Si, listenin' interested until Jim got through, when he began to laugh.

"'Served the dern old skinflint right,' says he, chucklin' all over. 'Wanter know how I did it? Well, seein' it's outlawed by now, I don't mind tellin'. First I starved them geese for three days, to empty their stummiks and make them hungry as a herd of cannibals. Then, when I was hitchin' the patent 'lectric machine on to their necks, I throwed down part of an ear of corn,

ostensible to attract their attention, but reely to skin Si. That corn wasn't as innercent as it looked, for I'd picked out about a dozen kernels, scooped 'em holler from the inside end where they are white, plugged 'em with little pieces of gold, stuffed up the openings with dough and stuck 'em back on the cob. Course the fowls gobbled 'em down goose style, and a few hours later, when we hacked 'em open, the corn was all digested and nothin' was left but the nuggits.'"

The narrator slowly gathered his legs beneath him. "Reckon I'll go up to the house now and see if t'old woman has got that washin' done. Keeps me powerful busy overseein' her." And upon the audience a great silence fell, broken only by the diminishing thumps of old man Simpson's peg leg, as he stubbed his way into the distance.

The Rivalry of the Grave.*

BY ROBERT ADGER BOWEN.

HE wintry stars had hardly paled in the lowering sky that December morning when Clyde Penrhyn, with a weakness as of death, had tottered up the curving avenue that led to the rambling old house at Grumblethorpe. He had met the old negro who for years had been the first to enter the house in the mornings as he was in the act of unlocking the doors. He had gained admittance to the study through sheer force of white over black and had sent the old man, civil but protesting, to wake his master.

John Farrar enjoyed no more than another to be awakened from his early morning slumber; but the fact that he was awakened, and, moreover, somewhat curious as to the identity of his visitor, served to reconcile him to the demand upon him.

"An old friend," he repeated, "in dire need."

He made his way to the study.

There was nothing familiar to him in the form he saw seated there before the fresh log fire. The slouched hat pulled down over the face, the shapeless cloak drawn up to the chin, disguised all individuality. There was nothing familiar in the quick, yet staggering motion of the man, who acknowledged his greeting by going to the door and turning the key in the lock; but in the first tone of the voice, low as it was, there was that which made Farrar start.

"Farrar, have you ever seen a ghost?"

Penrhyn threw off his hat and cloak as he spoke. Farrar caught hold of the mantel shelf. They looked each other in the eyes.

"I am alive, Farrar. See — I am warm."

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

"Good God, how can it be? I saw you dead two days ago. I saw you lying in your coffin yesterday. How come you here?"

"You saw me in my coffin — but I was not dead. I knew when you stood over me; when you brushed my hair aside and laid your hand upon it. I have walked here. I am very weak."

He pointed to a small table on which stood a decanter and some glasses, but Farrar's hand shook so that he spilled the wine he tried to pour. He set the decanter down.

"Your wife! Your friend, Winchester! Do they know? Penrhyn, unriddle me this horror."

"They think me dead — as I am to them — as I am to every one but you. Give me the wine, or I shall faint."

When he revived, Farrar was kneeling by him holding his hand. He felt intuitively that he was in the presence of a mystery which he dare not question lest it prove also a crime. Penrhyn divined this thought.

"You need not question me," he said. "I have come to tell you all. You are the only one who knew me in that life who is to know me in what life there is left to me. I died last Monday afternoon. This is Thursday morning and I am buried this afternoon. There is my obituary. No one knows but you that I came to life again last night while my wife was at dinner with *him*, my *friend* — but listen. I must not spoil my story by giving you its climax first."

"Penrhyn, Clyde, my dear fellow, you must not speak this way. You must not talk at all until you have rested."

"Rested! I have rested for two days and nights — absolute rest, except for the fire that raged in my brain. Ah! I have rested enough for the remainder of my days. You may order breakfast for two, but do not speak to me of rest."

He sat erect. Farrar drew up a chair before him.

"You know that I was a well and strong man last Monday and that I was found lying upon the floor of my entrance hall that afternoon — dead, they told you. My wife and my friend were blameless when they told you that. They thought it true. They did not think it best to tell you, or any one, what they knew had brought me there. They did not tell you how I had found them that afternoon in the rose arbor in the garden — what I saw, what

I heard — how I stood before them with the blood in my veins frozen, the power of movement gone, volition itself suspended. I did move, finally; but the ground, and the air, and the things around me were all one. I walked because I had walked; I found the house because it blocked the way my body had taken. Then I was dead for many hours."

He reeled in his chair, but steadied himself before Farrar could reach him.

"More wine," he whispered. "It costs something to tell that part. But the pain ended there. The rest will interest you.

"When the spirit came it found my body helpless. I could hear; I could smell; I could think; I could remember — but I could not move. *She* bent over me. I heard the regular rise and fall of her breathing; I smelled the aromatic odor of the new crape upon her gown. She spoke to some one near, and the words and that pungent odor linked themselves into the perception that they thought me dead. It was a restful thought.

"She spoke again; and *he* answered. The low murmured words took definite meaning in my ears. It was my burial they were discussing. The grave was ready. He had seen to that himself. The coffin was downstairs. They would put me into it as soon as it could be brought up.

"She left the room as they brought it in. She took no last look at me as I lay outside its shadow. I heard the men bearing it up the stairs, the heavy shuffle of their feet, the smothered directions as they laid it down. I knew old Dan was there, for I recognized his sniffle; and I felt them cast half-timid glances upon me where I lay. Then they lifted me and put me in, *he* holding my head. It was then that you came, and stood by me, and laid your hand upon my hair."

He held out his hand to Farrar, who took it and bent his forehead upon it.

"The precious hours sped by. I did not care for life; I did not fear death; but this was not death to which I was drifting hour by hour, minute by minute. I pictured my ghastly fate, I dwelt on its horrors, hoping that the hideousness of it might cause some muscle to contract, but the awful passivity remained unbroken.

"They were in the room again, he and she. I knew the night

was come, for I heard him light the candle, and the stillness in the room was palpable. Again I listened to their murmured words of tenderness, and understood the silences between. They might almost have touched me from where they sat!

"I felt the stillness deepen as the night's darkness stole in from the outer world. I heard the quick scurry of a mouse along the side of the wall.

"Then I heard them rise, and as she left the room he passed by my head. A moment later and he had lifted the lid of my coffin and put it lightly in place.

"The agony electrified me. My eyes opened to the thick blackness; my voice came in a hollow curse; my hands rose and touched the coffin lid. It moved. I raised it, turned it, used it as a prop, and fell upon the floor.

"The weakness that was upon me was torture, but from its very intensity I gained strength. It was not the fateful weakness that had held me as one dead. I could move. I could speak. I could feel the cold sweat of horror start upon my brow at the dread thought that that catalepsy was again stealing upon me. I got to my feet and stood leaning against the coffin, trembling and dizzy. My one idea was of flight, of escape forever from everything connected with my past. The sight of her face, or of his, would have upset my reason, might have brought back that fatal trance. In an agony of helplessness I stood there, and the more I tried to think, to move, the more I shivered with a cold sweat.

"Almost beside me, it seemed, the eerie laughter of an owl brought me to my senses. I must not be detected. The sight of a human face at that moment would have driven me to madness.

"I opened the door and listened. The wide spaces of the house were silent, except for the audible pulsing of the darkness. I felt with a quick sense of relief that none of the servants would venture near that part of the house with its supposed ghostly tenant. Would he and she come again to look at me in my coffin?

"I groped my way to the fuel box, my mind clearing as I moved. I remembered with a gruesome satisfaction that there had been no fire kept up in that room for two days. The fuel box would be full.

"I lifted a great log, but almost let it fall in my weakness. Then I gathered strength and bore it to the coffin. Again I did this,

and again. Then several smaller sticks, and among them and over them I wound the soft folds of a large blanket shawl. That corpse will not move, Farrar. I lifted the lid, adjusted it, screwed it tightly down. I do not think any one will care to raise it, or question who closed it.

"My feet were in the noiseless slippers their care had laid me out in, so I crept to the garret stairs and stole softly up. There was plenty of room in the huge old place for one more ghost, dead or alive, and I waited there until I knew the house would be still for the night. Then I crept downstairs; saw my coffin, black, long, heavy, closed; on down into the library, to my desk.

"They had found my money, and had counted it neatly into piles. But there was some more which they had not found, and I took that. I left the rest to defray the funeral expenses. Then I came here, to you, Farrar."

What Farrar did was to lay his cheek again Penrhyn's cold face.

"All that I have is yours," he said, huskily.

. . . . . .

As the weeks went by, Farrar realized that Penrhyn would never again be the man he had been. His entire nature seemed to have undergone some subtle change. A consuming restlessness possessed him.

He made no attempt to hide from Farrar the dominant idea that impelled him — a vengeance so sweeping and refined that Farrar was aghast, and all but regretted having pledged his word to observe the secret of his existence.

They had been friends from boyhood, and the only breach that had ever come between them was when Penrhyn's friendship with Stanley Winchester began. Farrar had never liked him — had never trusted him — had said so much to Penrhyn. That was when the three had been together at one of the large Northern universities. Since then, Penrhyn's marriage had separated him from Farrar yet more; though there had never been a time when at a call from either the other would have failed to respond. Living with the wide distances between them of the thousands of acres of large plantations, they had seen each other less and less, Farrar giving himself over to the pleasures and liberties of his bachelor state and coming little in contact with his neighbors. The shock of Pen-

rhyn's supposed sudden death had stirred him profoundly, while the subsequent call upon his sympathy had revived the old affection for him in full force.

For the twentieth time he was pleading with him.

"This is madness, Clyde," he was saying. "It is worse, it is criminal, and it is eating your very life away. Give up this unnatural dream of revenge. Acknowledge yourself. Claim your property. You have youth, health, fortune, talent — all that a man could ask for. Let the dead past be dead, and live your new life."

"It is impossible. You call it a dream! It is no dream, Farrar. My scheme will work — it is working. I have seen the poison begin to act. It gave me the first sensation of delight I have known since those days and nights of agony. It is all I have to live for — all that lives in me."

"You have seen him? He has seen you?"

Farrar almost groaned as he put the question.

"Yes. It was at twilight; in the bottom lands; by the old bridge. He was standing there, where he and I had often stood, and I came upon him unawares. He must have felt a presence near, for he turned and saw me. Ah! Farrar, had there been any doubt in my mind that I had dreamed before, the sight of the abject fear and horror in his face at that moment would have banished it. I stole away silently in the gray darkness, but had I passed close before him I believe his terror would have been only the greater. That was my entering wedge. Will it work, do you think now?"

Farrar walked up and down the polished floor, across which the leaping flames of the big fire, in the gathering dusk, threw broad zigzags of light which played over the backs of the books in the tall open cases, and lit the ruddy cheeks of the half-dozen old ladies and gentlemen that hung above them. Penrhyn was standing before the fire, his tall figure silhouetted on the wall beyond. He had apparently forgotten Farrar's presence, for he started when the latter went up to him and put his arm about him.

"Let us get away from here, Clyde. Let us put the sea between us and your past. I will shut up Grumblethorpe — turn the land over to the tenants — and we will travel, travel, travel until peace comes to you."

Penrhyn turned to him with his rare smile.

"You are the best friend a fellow ever had," he said. "It is selfish of me to have brought myself and my misery to you. I have thought of that. But there is nothing that could induce me to forego a tittle of my revenge upon him — upon *them*. I am dead, Farrar, to all else. I did not know it at first, but it grows upon me week by week, almost hour by hour. I think *that* day something snapped in my brain. I sometimes have wondered," he went on, with a heavy sigh, "if I really did not die when that black unconsciousness came upon me, and whether some part of me — the best part — is not atrophied."

"You are becoming morbid — terribly so."

"That is death."

Farrar shook his head. There were moments when his inability to influence Penrhyn angered him.

It was about a week after this that Penrhyn found himself alone in the house at nightfall. Farrar had been gone all day on a matter of business that had called him to the county seat, and would not be back for some hours yet. Writing a brief note to explain where he had gone, Penrhyn walked out into the winter night.

In his solitary walks he always took the same direction, always with the same fierce longing at his heart. Now and then, as he had drawn near the broad acres of his own land, he had met some well-known negro who had known him from his boyhood, but who saw only an unfamiliar figure in the loose cloak and drooping hat which Penrhyn always wore now as his sufficient disguise. On these occasions he had exchanged the rustic greetings, and passed on, feeling at each time an added sense of his own mystery and aloofness.

He walked rapidly, feverishly.

The night lay about him in moonlit splendor. On every side there was the influence of wide, uninhabited space. The air was full of the delicious purity of frost upon pine forests and the wild life of the woods was astir in ghostly hootings and the sharp bark of a far-away fox.

Penrhyn avoided the public road, which lay like a broad band of reddish gold in the moonlight, and took the by-paths through

forest and over withered cotton fields where the unpicked cotton gleamed like bleached bones. The beauty of the night was as nothing to him. He was sick with impatience at the thought of the miles that lay between him and his goal. The fire in him burned fiercer as the possibility of the gratification of his consuming desire became more real.

As he drew near the outlying woods of his former home he left even the winding path and lost himself in the thicker shadows. A party of negroes, men and women, passed not far from him, their loud laughter coming to him with easy familiarity. He smiled grimly as he thought how they would scatter in terror and rend the air with shrieks did he appear before them as they had known him. Then the smile faded from his face.

He could see the lights of the big house now, as they trembled through the swaying branches of the surrounding naked oaks and elms. The desire to go straight up to the house, up the front steps, to walk in upon them as they were doubtless sitting alone in the library swept over him so strongly that his breath caught in his throat.

He might have yielded to the momentary impulse had not the rhythmic beat of horses' feet upon the hard earth been borne to him upon the frosty air. He caught the fence near which he stood while a sudden dizziness made his eyes close. He knew the long swinging gait of his favorite horses. He felt intuitively that his opportunity, patiently waited for, had come. Then his brain cooled and he leaped the fence with the agility of an athlete.

He struck into the curve of the disused avenue and followed it to its junction with the drive up which they were coming. There he waited in the shadow of the trunks of some giant oaks. He was aware that the bitterness in his heart at that moment was malignity, but he never swerved in his purpose.

They had passed the gateway. Well he knew the sound as the wheels swung around the long curve just within. He knew the instant that sound would yield to the rhythm of the hoofs upon the stretch of beach-like earth; when that in turn would become the whirring of the wheels through the bar of sand; and that, the crunching of the gravel just before the final smooth sweep under the elms, up to the front steps.

They were very near him. Their voices reached him, low, confiding, with just a subdued ripple of the laughter that once had sent the happy blood along his veins with delicious madness. He threw aside his cloak and hat and stepped out from the shadow into the sifted light.

An instant later and the sweet stillness was pierced by a woman's horrified scream, and Penrhyn heard the hoarse gasp of a man in sudden mortal terror. An instant he caught the frenzy on the two faces and the fear that dilated their eyes. Then the spirited horses, after a quivering swerve, snorting, had dashed on swiftly into the semi-darkness.

. . . . . .

Katherine Penrhyn was alone in the lofty drawing-room of Penrhynholm, into which the first cold shadows of the dusk began to steal. She became aware of this fact by watching the thickening of the firelight, its mellowing into ruddier gold; and she shivered with a chill that was not of the rooms. She had become strangely sensitive to darkness recently.

She rose in the sombreness of the heavy folds of her mourning and pulled the bell cord.

"Light the candles," she said, when the butler came; "light them all, and close the shutters tight."

She watched him do her bidding. As the soft light gathered and filled the corners of the large room, she sighed.

"That is all. When Mr. Winchester comes, show him in here."

She was very restless. Now that the lights were lit she moved about the room, sinuous, pallid against the blackness of her gown, purposeless in her easy grace. When she heard the sound of wheels on the hard drive she went to the fire and stood, the candles in their silver holders on the mantel shelf above her casting a glory upon the auburn of her hair.

"Alone!" Winchester said, as he took her hands in his.

"I could not bear the others."

"This cursed place oppresses you," he said, with a note of sharpness in his tone. "Must you linger here any more?"

"I dare not go — yet," she murmured. Her eyes met his with a fuller meaning. She saw that he was very white.

"You are ill," she said, with quick alarm.

"No," he answered, as he turned from her to the large bowl of roses and bent over them, but the wan look on his face had deepened her own pallor. Her breath came audibly.

"You haven't seen It again?"

The words were wrung from her in an agony.

"You haven't! Oh! you haven't!"

Winchester bent his face deeper over the roses. The blood in his throat seemed choking him. He was silent.

She sank into a chair with a broken cry of despair which stung Winchester. He turned to her vehemently.

"Katherine, we must not be children. What is done is past. We never measured the outcome. Now there is life, happiness —"

She stopped him with an appealing gesture.

"And this thing!" she whispered.

He recoiled. Then he dropped on his knee beside her.

"It will pass," he said, hoarsely. "God knows what it is. Three months ago I would have laughed —"

The words died away. They were both trembling.

"This is folly," he said, gathering his nerve with an effort. "We are unstrung. The loneliness of this place is depressing. Let us leave it, Katherine, and we shall forget."

She shook her head sadly. She knew as well as he that he spoke without faith.

"What are the people about here to you, dearest?" he pleaded. "You are almost a stranger to them, as much as I am. Let us leave this unhappy place. Be my wife and let us go."

"You must go," she said stolidly.

"And leave you. Leave you here to have that dread before you always! To see it when you went out; to have it walk in upon you here!"

She quailed beneath his words.

"Be merciful!" she whispered. "Give me time, and I will do as you ask."

They looked at each other and knew that that dread was real.

She leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes, the heavy lashes accentuating her pallor. Winchester thought that she was faint. His own face was burning, his temples throbbing painfully. The room was very warm.

He crossed it, opened the glass doors of one of the windows and unbolted the shutter. As he threw it open a broad band of gold light shot out from the brilliant room, across the piazza, on to the grass beyond.

His heart leaped and stood still. There, facing him, It stood in the path of the golden light. He reeled and clutched at the swinging shutter. An unutterable, sickly fear weakened him until he swayed back and forth; a something greater than horror made him groan aloud.

Katherine was beside him. He turned his bleared eyes to hers. She understood.

. . . . . .

"Has not your revenge been sufficient, Clyde? To what end do you expect to carry it?"

"I do not know. Time shall tell that. Sufficient? It has but begun."

Farrar knocked the cold ashes out of his pipe and stared before him. He realized that this thing must end; that he must end it. Penrhyn was consuming his life with the ever-growing intensity of his passion. He had seen Winchester that day and was startled at the gaunt look of the man. He had been told that Katherine never left the house; that a nervous disorder puzzled her physician. He suddenly became aware that he was abetting a crime.

"Clyde," he said, very slowly, "you must release me from my oath."

Penrhyn flushed with unwonted anger.

"I shall not," he said, between his teeth. He was like some wild beast brought to bay.

Farrar met his burning eyes unflinchingly.

"I swore to keep the secret of your existence," he said, in the same slow and measured tone. "I would pledge myself to more than that to please you. But I never dreamed to what you would devote your body, mind and soul."

"Nor did I when I asked your oath."

"I believe you. But my word has been your shield. A great wrong was done you, and you suffered much. That made you," Farrar's voice shook, "everything in my eyes that deserved my loyalty."

He paused, watching Penrhyn's impassive profile.

"Clyde, I saw Winchester to-day. You are killing him. He had the look of one hunted to the death. I cannot let this thing go on. I cannot let you wreck the lives of three human beings."

"You can do nothing. You are bound to silence."

Penrhyn's thin nostrils were dilated. His eyes glared into Farrar's. Every nerve was tense.

"I can break my word for a higher service."

Both men sprang to their feet, confronting each other. Then Farrar sat down, covering his eyes.

He had seen murder in Penrhyn's face. It was not that which struck him to the heart, but the sudden leaping into the eyes of a sinister craft. When he looked up again, Penrhyn was beside him, his anger gone.

"It is only a few weeks more," he said. "They marry then. Think of the misery I have known. Think of all I give up to them, and grant me this one satisfaction."

Farrar was dumb. He had aided in bringing the man he loved to this.

"And if I do," he said, sadly, "if I do as you wish and let you have your way until they marry, what then? You will let them go away? You will seek no disclosure then?"

"I swear it to you."

"And no revenge? You won't follow them?"

"No."

Farrar groaned.

"I don't believe you," he said, with a sob.

"I will swear it."

"And you will use no violence?"

"Are the dead ever violent?"

Farrar had yielded, weakly, he knew.

After that, for many days, he watched Penrhyn closely, who seemed more like his natural self than he had been since he had come to Farrar nearly six months before. He made an effort to interest himself in Farrar's affairs; he looked at books, and one evening Farrar, coming in late, heard him at the piano. It was wild and passionate music, tumultuous, with an abandon of feeling even in the softer measures — but Farrar was glad to hear it. To

him, Penrhyn had, ever since that evening of their talk, been winningly gentle. He had not been again to Penrhynholm. Yet Farrar was ill at ease. He felt that Penrhyn was saving himself for some refinement of his desire.

Farrar was right in this impression. The last time that Penrhyn had appeared to Winchester he had himself noticed with a sudden alarm the broken nerve of his victim. The confirmation which Farrar's words had put upon his fear armed him with a forbearance cruelly akin to that with which a cat plays with a mouse. He trembled lest he should lose his prey — at the thought that Winchester might, in his terror, flee from the accursed surroundings of his treachery and deprive him of his cherished vengeance — at a graver thought than that, which he kept to himself with the new cunning which was one of the saddest phases of his state of mind.

In their last meeting it had been shown to him how dangerously near the limit of endurance he had pushed his terrorizing revenge, and he had realized with swift intuition the extent of the ghastly dread he had inspired, and the brooding despair that might seek to escape it by a self-inflicted death. The crushing fear of failure had steeped his mind in a cruel bitterness.

Then had come, after days of torment, the report of the approaching marriage of his wife and Winchester, and with it a reassurance which deadened any other effect of the news which Farrar, shocked himself, had feared for Penrhyn. But there had suddenly come to him another great dread — the doubt of Farrar.

It was with the instinct of the savage that he veiled the added fever under an assumed calm.

. . . . . .

It was the wedding night. Katherine sat waiting. She had sent for Winchester to come to her for a moment before she went downstairs.

She could hear the sound of voices from the drawing-room, and every now and then the rattle of wheels, as another of the few invited guests drove up.

The cold fear that was upon her was overpowering. If she could have screamed! If she could have wept!

She turned pitifully to Winchester as he came in. He was

more at ease than he had been for many a day. The light of expectancy was in his face.

"I cannot go through with it," she pleaded. "I cannot bear it."

"You are beautiful," he murmured, ignoring the appeal in her eyes. "Be brave. You would not cast a shadow on this night for me?"

The soft folds of the smoky gauze rose and fell with the heaving of her bosom. Her head, with its crown of reddish hair, drooped.

Winchester bent over her and kissed the whiteness of her neck.

"I was thinking," she said slowly, "that I would not mind it so much if I could wear a wedding veil."

He laughed softly.

"I would not have so much of your loveliness clouded. Brides in wedding veils are like lilies in a mist. The perfect rose of your beauty makes its own halo."

She gave him a smile, though in truth his words had stabbed her. She saw that he did not understand.

The mellow stroke of the tall clock on the stairway came to them in the silence. Katherine's maid discreetly opened the door of the dressing-room and gave a little cough.

Katherine clung to Winchester.

"I know it is very weak," she sobbed drily, "but I cannot help it."

He comforted her and soothed her, until she rested against him, quiet.

His eye fell on her hand as it rested upon his arm — on her wedding ring.

"It is time that this came off," he said, as his fingers touched the ring.

She shivered.

A dark flush sprang into his cheeks — a pang of jealousy contracted his heart. He drew the ring off, hesitated a moment, and flung it into the fire. Then he turned to Katherine, smiling.

She was staring beyond him, stricken into lifelessness. The ashen pallor of her lips sent the blood frozen to his heart. He seized her extended hand as it pointed behind him.

"Katherine! For the love of God! *I dare not look!*"

She retreated from him, her eyes fastened in horror upon his blanched face. She saw him not. Her lips were whispering disjointed, inarticulate words.

He followed her step by step, reading in her straining eyes what his own dare not look upon.

Then he flung himself around wildly, crouching, yielding to the irresistible terror which bade him act. He staggered backwards, clutching at his throat.

In the semi-obscurity made by the shadow of the high bed and its heavy curtains Penrhyn stood in his burial clothes, ghastly white, motionless.

Winchester's voice rang out, vibrant in despair.

"Katherine, there is only death for you and me. Beyond the grave there are no ghosts."

She did not hear. She was reeling, her beautiful arms outstretched imploringly to Penrhyn, his name upon her lips.

Penrhyn saw the gleam of bright steel in Winchester's hand as it pointed towards Katherine. He sprang to her and caught her, shielding her body with his own.

He scarce felt the burning sting in his chest as the sharp report of a pistol filled the house. He did not heed the second report as Winchester, in his frenzy, turned the barrel against his own temple and fired again.

He knew, only, for one lingering moment, that in her need she had turned to him, had called his name — that he had saved her life with his own.

The Stolen Wedding Trip.*

BY HOWARD CROSBY WARREN.

THERE was a fire in the electric-light station on Forty-Sixth Street one evening last June — not a very serious one, but just enough to throw the whole plant out of gear. The company set to work energetically and had everything in full running order again by nine o'clock. This incident the ordinary householder and pedestrian would have regarded merely as a nuisance, but, singularly enough, it was but a few minutes before the fire that the discovery of a serious leak in the gas main had necessitated cutting off the gas, thus plunging that section of the city into total darkness for nearly two hours. Then everybody criticised both companies impartially and forgot the matter next day. But there are at least two families who will not soon forget the episode.

When the lights went out at Cartwright & Taylor's livery stable, Mr. Taylor was in the act of giving directions to several of his drivers. Two large church weddings were scheduled for the same hour and a number of carriages had been ordered from his establishment. Mr. Taylor had already sent some off and was now attending to the wants of the bridal parties.

"Hurry up, boys, or you'll be late," he cried. "Won't do to keep them weddin's waitin'. Here, Mike, you go to Judge De Soto's on Fifth Avenue. They are the groom, you know. And you, Tom Baker, hustle round to 87 West Thirty-Blankth Street — that's the other groom. And say, Tom, you're to — "

Just then the office was thrown into utter darkness. Several men at once scurried off after lanterns. Mr. Taylor waited a few moments and then impatiently struck some matches and peered at the list. The second match burned his fingers and he dropped it with an emphatic remark. Then he continued in the darkness:

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"You're to drive them to St. Basil's Church, you know. And you, Mike, you're to take Mr. De Soto to St. Job's. Be lively, now!"

Lanterns now appeared, the bustle and confusion subsided and Mr. Taylor proceeded to give out the remaining directions.

Tom Baker was kept waiting in front of No. 87 some time. Henry Gaines was making his wedding toilet when the lights went out and his progress was somewhat impeded by the occurrence. Being a stranger in town, he was uncertain how to meet the emergency. At last he managed to summon help and a lamp from the parlor was temporarily secured. His cousin John, who was to act as best man, had fared no better; and so by the time both were ready to start, they realized they were already due at the church.

"Touch her up lively, driver," said John as they leaped into the vehicle. "We're late. To the church!" and away they drove as fast as was safe in the dim light. St. Job's Church is only a couple of blocks below St. Basil's on the Avenue and neither of the men noticed that they were being carried on to the latter.

St. Basil's had suffered, of course, from the general calamity, and for many minutes the ushers had been scurrying about, lighting and sticking candles in every available place. A large audience was assembled. The bride was there already with her party, waiting, and the organ was rolling out a prolonged and vociferous prelude. But no groom had as yet appeared.

"Here's George at last," said one of the ushers, as two masculine forms appeared faintly in the darkness outside. "Shake it up, old man, we're all waiting!"

Henry flew along under the canopy and into the vestry of the church. An usher waved a candle and the organ pealed forth the opening strains of the wedding march. Henry peered about the dim vestry in a confused manner as he divested himself of his overcoat, but John seized him by the arm and dragged him on. Then the ushers, followed by the bride and her party, marched solemnly towards the chancel. In the gloom no one noticed that the groom appeared a trifle lanker and more fair-haired than usual.

Henry was too preoccupied to observe the church, but some things about the gathering in the chancel puzzled him not a little. What was that peculiar pose of Alice's? Who was that usher there at his right, whom he did not recognize? Why was—?

But, there. He was only going to be married once — better attend to the ceremony, and not let his thoughts wander in that style!

"Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" the clergyman was saying.

"Wait a minute, Dr. Gould," shouted Henry, to the astonishment of every one. "This is *not* Alice Foster, I am sure. No, *I will not* have this woman to my wedded wife!"

"You'd better not try!" cried an excited voice from the rear of the church. And then every one burst out laughing, for the voice was unmistakably that of George De Soto, and his friends realized all at once that the man who stood beside the bride was a stranger.

Explanations were necessarily brief. De Soto and his friend had discovered their mistake immediately on entering St. Job's and had hastened at once to St. Basil's.

Henry and his cousin hurried down the aisle amid a renewed ripple of laughter. In his confusion Henry seized the overcoat De Soto had just left in the vestry and flew out with it into the street. The carriage that had brought De Soto was standing where they had left their own a few moments before. They jumped inside, calling out to the driver: "St. Job's Church, corner of Fifty-Blankth Street, you stupid fool"; and sank back on the cushions, snickering.

Arrived at St. Job's, the delayed ceremony was completed without further mishap, and Henry and Alice soon passed down the aisle together, man and wife. They entered the carriage in which Henry had come, and drove away.

Now, old Mike, the driver, was not the quickest witted man in the world. On the way to the church he had been told by De Soto, who was always very exact, that after the wedding he was to drive him and his bride to the Tweedy mansion. The little *entr'acte* had seemed rather strange to him at first. Why had Mr. De Soto driven to St. Basil's Church and back again? Perhaps the ring had miscarried or the supply of holy water at St. Job's had given out. At all events, it was none of his business; he had his orders and that was all that concerned him. And so he had quite dismissed the incident from his mind by the time the couple appeared. Of course, he drove straight to the Tweedys'.

Henry and Alice were so absorbed in each other that they were

only slightly surprised to find so many carriages at the house before them. They walked up the steps quite unconsciously and entered the crowded hall. The electric lights were still unresponsive and the servants had placed candles and lamps of every sort and description about the rooms. Alice was in a dream and it all seemed like fairyland to her. Arrived at the end of the hall, Henry paused. The guests were looking at them in no little astonishment. Suddenly the situation dawned upon him.

"Alice!" he exclaimed, "this isn't your house!"

"Why, no, it isn't!" she replied, waking up to reality.

But by this time the throng of entering guests was pushing them onward, and there was no stopping.

"This way, madam." "This way, sir."

Their wraps were taken away and they were fairly borne along to the reception room, where Mrs. De Soto caught sight of them.

"Who *are* they, George?" she whispered.

"I'm sure I don't know, Maud," he replied. "She looks like a bride herself, and he — Oh, I do believe he's the man who got into our church by mistake and was going to marry you!" And George De Soto burst out laughing. Then he beckoned to Henry.

"Following me up again, sir, I see," he said smiling. "Well, you're too late this time; but you are welcome to stay and help us entertain. Only I suppose you would prefer to receive your own friends at your own — at your wife's house."

A few words served to explain the situation. The outer garments they had worn were soon found, and they were shown out with marked politeness.

Meanwhile the carriages that had followed Henry's from the church were divided. The remainder of the bridal party had simply followed their leader. A number of the guests did the same. A few drivers who had received instructions beforehand had gone to Mrs. Foster's. Some stopped for further directions. The streets were still quite dark and none of the guests knew exactly where they were. The carriages with bridesmaids and ushers had become tangled up in the jam near the Tweedys' and could not be extricated immediately. It was some time before everything was straightened out and the progress of the reception and dinner at the Fosters' was consequently much delayed.

Alice and Henry had planned a modest trip to the old Gaines homestead near Saratoga. They were to spend the first night at the latter place. When all was ready they made a dash for their carriage and, amid the usual shower of rice and old shoes, drove off to the Grand Central. This time the lights were lighted, and the driver had been carefully instructed beforehand.

"There are the tickets, porter," said Henry, when they reached the station. "Get these things checked quick, for we're late. I'll be in the waiting-room."

In the station they found Mr. and Mrs. De Soto. George smiled as he recognized Henry, and said to him:

"You're following us up still, I see. Going to the Falls?"

"No, to Saratoga," replied Henry.

Mrs. De Soto spoke to Alice, and the latter was proud of her first opportunity of referring to "Mr. Gaines" with that peculiar tone of possession that only a new wife can assume. Then De Soto's man came in with tickets and checks, and they parted. A moment later Henry's porter came in too, and he and Alice started for the platform. They were stopped by a gateman.

"The other door, sir," said he. "This is not the Special."

Henry glanced at the signboard over the door in some surprise, but went obediently through the other gate. He looked at his seat check, and found the car.

"Why, this is a sleeper," he exclaimed as he entered it.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir," said the local despot. "Just what your ticket calls for, sir. This train don't carry no day coaches, sir."

Soon they were comfortably seated, and forgot the world, the train, and the porter in thoughts of each other.

"Anything I can do for you, sir?" asked the porter, coming back some time after.

"No," answered Henry, shortly. "Oh, wait," he added. "What makes the train so late in starting? We've been waiting here half an hour, almost. We are due to start at eight thirty."

"Eight thirty, sir? No, sir; nine o'clock, sir!"

"What, the Special?" returned Henry, repeating the word used by the gateman.

"Yes, sir; the Special, sir."

"And when are we due at Saratoga?"

"*Saratoga*, sir! Why, we don't go nowheres near Saratoga, sir! First stop is Rochester, sir."

"Good gracious, Alice!" exclaimed Henry, "we've got in the wrong train, somehow; and our train must have gone long ago!"

Then he pulled out his tickets and looked at them. To his amazement they read: "New York to Montreal, via Niagara Falls."

At that moment a messenger-boy entered the car and began calling out, "Gaines! Gaines!" in a dismal voice.

"Here!" said Henry, beckoning to him.

The boy handed him a telegram, which he read aloud:

> Gaines, Buffalo sleeper, Special Limited Mail,
> Grand Central Depot, New York.
> Overcoats and tickets exchanged. Stop at my rooms, Cataract Hotel, Falls. Where shall we stop at Saratoga? Wire train, Troy.
>
> GEORGE DE SOTO.

Alice burst into a fit of hysterical laughter. Henry read the telegram over again, thought an instant, and then made a sudden resolution.

"We'll do it, Alice!" he cried. "We *must* do it! Our baggage is going there anyway; it's too late to stop that. There's really nothing else for us to do, you see. And really, it will be awfully jolly!"

He kissed her before the whole car, and she responded gleefully. Then he scribbled off a message, and gave it to the boy. It read as follows:

> George De Soto, Saratoga Express, Troy.
> Stop at Congress Hall. Will hold your rooms. Error regretted.
> HENRY GAINES.

And so it came to pass that Henry Gaines, after failing to steal George De Soto's bride and bridal reception, succeeded in stealing his wedding journey.

The Artist's Story.*

BY COUNTESS LOVEAU DE CHAVANNE.

T was almost dusk, on a wintry afternoon, when I was sitting in my studio wondering if, after all, I had not been a fool in believing I was ever destined to make a living as an artist. My dear old father — a small manufacturer of silks at Lyons — had spared all that was possible from his savings to give me an art education in Paris. I had entered myself as a pupil at the Academy and had been a most diligent student at the life classes. There the rapidity with which I worked, the general correctness of my drawing and the truth of color in my sketches earned for me much praise. When my funds were almost exhausted — and I knew that, except under the most urgent necessity, I must not ask for more from home — I sought to fill my pockets by selling pictures to the art dealers. They gave me but little encouragement; all that the most favorable was willing to do was to put a picture in his window and try to dispose of it — in which case I was to receive three-fourths of the purchase money. Day after day I called to inquire if any discerner of unrecognized genius had found out the merit of my work. The same statement was always made to me — "a gentleman had looked at it and promised to call again." But the mysterious promisers never did return.

While I was meditating on my gloomy prospects I heard a low knock at the door. I rose and opened it. The gentleman who stood outside was tall, rather slender and dressed in black or very dark clothes — in the dim light I could not tell which.

"Monsieur Jacques Bourdin?" he inquired.

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

"Yes, Monsieur. Will you not do me the favor to enter?"

He bowed and passed in.

"I must apologize for asking you into a dark room," I said, as I moved toward the table on which stood a lamp. "I had almost fallen asleep in the twilight."

"Pray, do not light the lamp; my eyes are weak, and what I have to say to you I can say better as we are."

My curiosity was thoroughly aroused. My visitor was evidently a gentleman; his manner and accent proclaimed that. In his voice there was a sadness which at once evoked sympathy.

"As you will, Monsieur. To whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"I do not wish to give my name; I am here on business that can be transacted without disclosing it. I must ask you to excuse the customary formality."

I bowed and pointed to a chair. My visitor took it, paused a moment, as if thinking how he should begin, then spoke quickly, almost abruptly, as if he were anxious to lose as little time as possible.

"Monsieur Bourdin, I have been told by some one who knows you well — no matter who — that you can paint from life with great quickness and accuracy. I want a figure painted to-night."

"To-night!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, to-night, and it must be done before daylight to-morrow morning; that is, the sketch; you can finish it here afterwards. The subject is a strange one, and the conditions on which I shall give the commission are that you submit to be taken to and brought from my house blindfolded; that you shall not ask any questions; that you shall never tell any one what you may see there; that you shall never show any one the picture you paint or reveal its subject; and that if you should ever meet me after to-night you shall make no sign of recognition. I know that these are startling conditions, but I am willing to pay liberally. I will pay you one thousand francs now and another thousand when I send for the finished picture. Do you accept?"

For the moment I was stunned. Here was what seemed to be a fortune placed suddenly within my grasp. The conditions were certainly startling, but I was young, I had no fear and the mystery

piqued me. It seemed to me as if I had been suddenly transported back to the days of the Tour de Nesle, in which Marguerite de Valois summoned her lovers, who arrived blindfolded and were borne away dead by the silent waters. If some such tragedy were in store for me I was poor enough and desperate enough to take all the chances.

"Well," said he somewhat impatiently, "do you accept?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Good! Here are one thousand francs."

"I will give you a receipt."

"It is not necessary. Now gather your materials and select the largest canvas you have."

I got together what was needed.

"I am ready, Monsieur."

"Then you must allow me to blindfold you. Give me your handkerchief. There! Does that hurt you?"

"No."

My hat was fortunately a soft one. He turned the brim down so as to conceal the fact that my eyes were covered.

"Now, follow me to the carriage, and remember, Monsieur Bourdin, I trust to your honor as a gentleman to fulfil all the conditions I have imposed."

It was with no little difficulty that I managed to descend the stairs with my load. At the landings the stranger took hold of my elbow and gently guided me. As we passed into the street my companion spoke in a whisper to some one who was evidently awaiting him.

I was then put into a carriage and driven rapidly away, but so many turns were made that I could not determine in what direction we were going. Some one was sitting by my side. I presumed it was my visitor, but he did not seem inclined to speak, and I had plenty to occupy my thoughts. Where was I being taken, and for what purpose? The more I pondered the more uneasy I became. My only comfort lay in the certainty that I had a thousand francs in my pocket.

After a while the carriage stopped and I was told to get out. I was led up a flight of steps, entered a doorway, then up a staircase, and finally along a corridor. I judged from the height and width

of the staircase, which was of stone or marble, and the rich carpeting on the passage and corridor, that I was in a grand mansion.

"Sit down, Monsieur Bourdin, there is a chair immediately behind you. When you hear me close the door of this room you may uncover your eyes and begin. You are to paint precisely as it is, the — what is lying on the bed. You must finish before five o'clock to-morrow morning. When you are ready to go away, you must rebandage your eyes, then sound a bell you will find on the table. A person will come and conduct you to your studio. In ten or twelve days I will send for the picture; it must be packed so that no one can see it, and you must pack it yourself. The person who will come for it will pay you the second thousand francs. You will find refreshments on the table. Now I leave you. Do not forget the conditions you have promised to keep."

I heard him close the door. Then I eagerly tore the bandage from my face. The glare of a brilliantly-lighted room oppressed my eyes for a few seconds, and I could only distinguish that the apartment was large and magnificently furnished. As my vision grew clearer, I saw that almost immediately in front of me was a very handsome coffin standing on a platform, or dais, covered with black velvet. I had been prepared for something strange, but the sudden sight of the coffin made me shudder. In a moment or two, however, I gathered courage enough to walk toward it. I raised the cover; it was empty. The lid stood by the side, and some of the silver screws had fallen on the floor. I picked one up and looked at it. Evidently the coffin had been opened by some unpractised hand. Where was its occupant? Instinctively I turned toward the bed. On it was lying the body of a woman. I looked at the face. I think it was the most beautiful I had ever seen. The expression was so calm and happy, it was difficult to believe she was not sleeping. I had noticed only the face. As my eyes passed from that to her body, a sight met them which drew from me a cry of horror and rage.

Her breast was bared, and through her heart a jewel-handled dagger was buried to the hilt!

I felt ill and faint. I went to the table and took a long draught of brandy. Then I came back to the bedside. It was not, as I had tried to persuade myself, a horrible dream, a phantasy. There

was the dagger, driven with unerring aim and deadly force. No blood had escaped from the wound. The bleeding must have been wholly internal. Again I glanced at the sweet, peaceful face. There was nothing in it to indicate the agony which I had been taught to look for in painful and sudden death.

Where was I? Upon what frightful tragedy had I lighted? Had this murdered woman been a faithless wife, or was she some innocent girl who had been enticed here to meet ruin and death? What should I do? What could I do?

My first impulse was to raise an alarm, but a moment's reflection convinced me of the uselessness and danger of such a proceeding. It was evident that the person or persons who had committed this crime would not hesitate at another to ensure safety. I had no idea in what quarter of Paris I was, nor of how to gain egress from the house. Beside, I had heard the door locked behind me.

But why should any one desire to perpetuate this terrible sight on canvas? That was a question I could not answer, though I racked my brain for a response. Then I looked again at the body, and the frightful fascination of the subject began to enthrall me. Its grim awfulness appealed to something in my artistic nature and urged me with irresistible force to begin work. I had always had a touch of morbidness in my inspirations, yet I had never conceived such a combination of the beautiful and the horrible. Yes, whatever I might feel it my duty to do on the morrow, I would work my best this night.

An absorbing desire to express not only what I saw, but what I felt took possession of me. Never before had I painted so quickly or so well. I obtained with a few touches effects that I had before vainly labored to produce. It seemed as if I were almost controlled by some overwhelming force; it was an inspiration. The soul and power of a great artist had temporarily passed into me, and my poor hands and eyes were but the means through which another was working.

The hours flew rapidly by, but I labored strenuously. The figure grew upon the canvas and began to look realistic in its deathlike fidelity. At last my aching hands and arms compelled me to rest. I looked everywhere for some mark or sign by which I could discover in whose house I was. Not the faintest clue rewarded

my search — nothing bearing a name, initial or monogram was to be found. Everything was of the most costly and luxurious description. Money had been lavishly spent in every direction. The coffin was a work of art — its chased handles and bars were of silver and gold — but the name-plate had not been attached. I noticed every detail with great minuteness, because I determined that the maker of so unusually splendid a coffin could easily be found, and that through him was the clearest and easiest way of bringing to justice the perpetrators of this foul crime.

Then I went back to my painting and again the fever of inspired work seized me. I was scarcely sensible of the lapse of time till the clock upon the mantelpiece warned me that it was already five. After considerable trouble I managed to pack my sketch in a way that would cover it without injuring the moist colors. I collected my brushes and tubes, tied the handkerchief over my eyes and rang the bell. Almost immediately I heard the door unlocked and the sad voice whose tones had become so thoroughly impressed on my memory asked:

"How have you succeeded?"

"Well."

"I am very glad. I will now take you to your studio. Come."

He led me through the passage, down the staircase and to the carriage. When I seated myself he took his place by my side. The horses were urged to a rapid pace, so fast, indeed, that I wondered the police did not interfere. My companion did not utter a word. When the carriage stopped, he helped me to descend, took me as far as the first staircase and said:

"When you reach the next landing you may uncover your eyes. I shall send for the picture in twelve days. Remember your promises; keep faith with me and you may secure a more powerful friend than you imagine. Good day."

I heard him pass away. The temptation to follow and instantly denounce him was almost irresistible. But sober second thought came to my aid. I reflected that he had at least one and probably two confederates in the carriage, and that at so early an hour it was unlikely I should find any one to render me efficient assistance, should I make an outcry. I passed upstairs and took off the handkerchief.

When I was once safe in my own room, I was torn by distracting doubts as to what I ought to do. If I held my tongue I should make two thousand francs certain, and possibly more in the future. Could I afford to throw away this wonderful opportunity? If I should inform the police I might very possibly be regarded as a madman, or, if my story were believed and the murderer or murderers traced, I should undoubtedly incur the vengeance of rich and powerful villains. My solemn promise, too, bound me to secrecy. But, then, I told myself I was not compelled to keep that when the doing so would involve the escape of a murderer. At last exhausted nature, which had been subjected to the most severe tension for twelve hours, claimed her rights. I slept, but my dreams were hideous. The figure of the dead woman rose ever before my fancy. She pointed to the dagger in her heart and seemed to entreat me to speak, although I heard no words and could not distinguish any sound.

It was nearly dusk when I awoke, troubled and refreshed, but with my mind fully made up to tell the police all I knew. I understood the necessity for acting with all possible dispatch, but I was hungry and felt that I needed something to give me strength and confidence before I undertook to make my extraordinary revelation. After I had once decided on a plan of action I felt easier. The dread of the ever-haunting presence of the dead woman began to disappear. I went to a restaurant I had been in the habit of frequenting when richer. Some of that villain's thousand francs should help to give me strength to denounce him. This idea pleased me, for it seemed to savor of retribution. I took up *Le Figaro*, turned over the pages carelessly, almost unconsciously, and was just about to lay it down when on the last page my eye caught this heading:

"FUNERAL OF THE BEAUTIFUL MARQUISE DE VALLECOURT."

The words startled me, for I had heard of the beauty of the lady about whom all male Paris had been raving for some months. I had never had an opportunity of seeing her, though I had much wished to do so. I did not know that she had been ill, and to learn suddenly that she was dead and buried shocked me not a little. I read the article with considerable interest. It stated that

the Marquise had died four days before of diphtheria after only a short illness. The last part of the article gave a brief description of the lady's appearance. As I read on I became more and more engrossed, for I could not but believe that the murdered woman whom I had sketched and the Marquise were one. The recognition of this fact frightened me. I could not help seeing that such a charge made against a man occupying the rank and station of the Marquis de Vallecourt would need more substantial proof than was to be found in my extraordinary story.

It was with great difficulty that I could manage to eat a part of my dinner. That done, I went back to my studio, took my sketch and set off for the office of the Minister of Police. I inquired for him, and after having stated to one or two minor officials that my business was of the utmost secrecy and importance, I was informed that he had gone home.

"Could I not communicate my wishes to his representative?"

On my replying negatively, I was told that if I particularly desired it I could be taken to the Minister's house, or I could see him at his office the next morning. I dreaded a night with that fearful secret still undisclosed, so I chose the former alternative.

I trembled a little when I was ushered into the presence of the famous Minister, but his calm, quiet manner soon reassured me.

"What is it that you have to disclose, Monsieur?" he asked.

"The secret of a murder, Monsieur."

"Well?"

"I wish to confide to you alone," I said as I glanced at the gentleman who had accompanied me from the office.

"That is impossible. Monsieur Rousseau is in possession of all the secrets of my department. Even if I were to hear you alone, I should be compelled to confide in others before I could act upon your story. Why do you hesitate?"

"Because, Monsieur, my accusation will appear almost incredible. I charge the Marquis de Vallecourt with being the murderer of his wife."

The Minister, who prided himself on his imperturbability, could not resist showing his surprise. He glanced at Monsieur Rousseau with an air of pity and contempt. I am sure that he thought I was mad.

"Madame la Marquise died of diphtheria. My wife knew her well and was greatly grieved at her illness and death. On what grounds do you base such a charge?"

I told my story as briefly as I could. Both my hearers listened attentively but, I felt, incredulously. When I had finished the Minister asked:

"What proof have you of the truth of this extraordinary tale?"

"None," I answered, "except the sketch I made. I had never seen the Marquise in life; if it be indeed her likeness, no other proof of my truth is needed."

"I knew her well," said the Minister. "Show me the sketch."

I unpacked it and placed it before him. He started as if he had been violently struck.

"It is indeed the Marquise," he murmured. Then turning to me he said: "Describe the man who came to your studio."

"I could not see him well. I think he had a moustache; he was tall and slender, and spoke in a low, sad voice."

"That would be a rough description of the Marquis, eh, Monsieur Rousseau?"

"Yes, Monsieur. I have heard that the Marquis was overwhelmed with grief, and that some of his friends feared for his reason."

"A needless fear," said I; "his grief is only remorse, or perhaps dread of discovery."

The instincts of the detective, who distrusts everybody and everything, were beginning to be aroused in me.

"Monsieur Bourdin, justice is indebted to you. All that can be done to-night shall be done. In the morning I shall again claim your aid. Go to your rooms at once, and do not leave them or speak to any one till I send for you; and lest you should be in personal danger, I will have the entrance to your apartment watched."

I thanked him for his courtesy, though I could not help knowing that he was actuated quite as much by a desire not to have me escape as by his wish to protect me.

. . . . . .

Monsieur Rousseau called for me in the morning. He told me I should have to accompany him to the cemetery of Père la Chaise,

as the Minister had decided to have the coffin of the Marquise taken from the family vault and opened. It had been brought into a room of the mortuary chapel when we arrived. The Minister and two or three assistants were examining the body. The wound had been found exactly as I had described.

I was cordially received by the Minister and told that the Marquis had been sent for under the pretext that there had been some informality about the register of the interment. Orders had also been given to bring the doctor who had signed the certificate of death, and also one of the surgeons attached to the Department of Justice.

I felt elated at my success and importance, and had no longer any qualms about my broken promise. All Paris, I was sure, would soon be ringing with praises of my shrewdness and courage.

Presently a gentleman entered, whispered to the Minister and handed him something wrapped in paper. It proved to be the dagger I had described.

"Let the Marquis be brought in," said the Minister.

All eyes were on the door. The Marquis entered looking pale and thoughtful. When he saw me, his look changed to one I tried hard to think showed fear, but still it seemed to me only like contempt.

"Ah, Monsieur Bourdin! I thought you were a gentleman. I see I made a mistake. You have betrayed me."

"Is it betrayal to give a criminal to justice?"

He looked at me and smiled ever so faintly, yet still perceptibly.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said the Minister, "I regret to be compelled to inform you that you are charged with having murdered your wife."

"Who makes this charge?"

"Monsieur Bourdin, who states that he saw her lying with a dagger buried in her heart."

"That is true."

"He confesses! Officers, arrest him."

"One moment, Monsieur le Minister. When that dagger was driven into my wife's heart it had ceased to beat for more than two days."

"Explain yourself, Monsieur."

"Madame la Marquise had a morbid dread of being buried alive. She made me swear to her that if she died before me, I would not allow her to be buried until her heart had been punctured. After the surgeons had pronounced her dead, I had her interred in the coffin where my beloved now rests; then after the funeral services, I determined that as her lightest wish was sacred to me when alive, so should a solemn request be honored in death. I removed her body from the coffin, placed her upon a bed, and while her dear lips smiled upon me, in her last sleep, drove a dagger through her heart. Leaving the room where she was lying, I seriously contemplated following her — I thought the thing over, gentlemen, philosophically, and finally determined to live a life which should be devoted to her glorious memory. Then it was that a fear possessed me. What if in time to come I should be visited by my dear one, for I believe in spiritual communication. Then it was that I decided that I should have something to which I could point and say, 'Behold, have I not done as you desired?' In this state I sought out Monsieur Bourdin. He has doubtless told you all else that you wish to know. The reason I desired to keep the matter secret can be easily understood."

The two doctors had arrived in time to hear the Marquis's explanation. They needed only to glance at the body to confirm his words.

Oh, how poor and miserable I felt! I crossed over to where the Marquis stood, and I knelt at his feet.

"Monsieur," I cried, "take back your money and the sketch and try to forgive me."

"Rise, Monsieur — I have forgiven you. I asked and expected more trust than I had a right to believe a stranger could have given to a stranger. Keep the money, finish the picture — and I hope it will not be the last you shall paint for me."

On the Upper Rio Grande.*

BY F. M. VAN HORN.

PEOPLE will tell you the old miner was mad, but that is the world's verdict on any man whose life and interests do not conform to its rules.

When the shadows had crept up from valley to peak, and the blazing snow-tops signalled the day's end, he would sit in the moonlight by his cabin door until the wail of coyotes from the pine-slopes answered the song of his violin. It was then that She was wont to come again, wooed by this song of the years, merging the Present into the Past; this song of his old, happy life in the far-away South, where the mines had given him gold, the old life into which She had come to outshine the gold, the life out of which She had gone, leaving it cold and barren as these moonkissed peaks. Then he had mocked the world that pitied him, because it could not understand, and had roamed about it from placer to prospect-hole, from range to range, to settle at last in this mountain-hedged valley. Here a river flows smoothly for a space before it dashes through its cañon to the plain, and down its edge creeps the inevitable trail of steel which ever seems to smile at Nature's barriers. With scant courtesy to men, he toiled in the world's way all day long, but when the moon rose up in the cold blue sky, his violin sang lovingly of warmer skies, and wooed Her back again. And so to-night She had come; tangible, real, She seemed, as of old; regal as when he had kissed Her and crowned Her queen of his happiness. With infinite love She seemed to listen to the ebb and flow of the string-told, passionate tale of his lonely life; then, as its sweetness died away to the river's moan, She beckoned him to come.

When the midnight Express plunged down the valley, the engineer applied the air in time to take from beneath the engine an old man whose lips murmured, for a moment only, in an unfamiliar Southern tongue. Next day, on the rocks at the river's edge, were found the scattered pieces of a violin.

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The next millionaire or successful professional or business man you meet and see if you think he has any cobwebs on his thinking apparatus. Then find out something about his diet, and see if you can discover any connection between the two.

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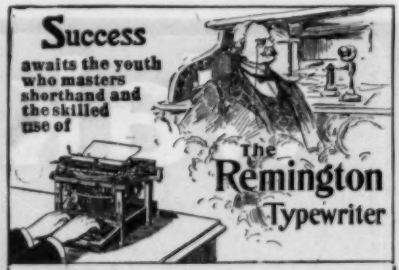

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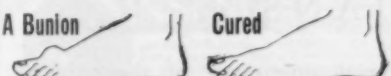

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